I: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

It may perhaps be ascribed to the pre-eminence
accorded by the Khasis to the female sex that successive 162
censuses have shown that the women of this race considerably exceed the men in number. According to the census of 1901, there are 1,118 females to every 1,000 male Khasis. This excess, however, is surpassed by that of the Lushais, 1,191 to 1,000, and it may possibly be due to the greater risks to life encountered by the men, who venture far into the plains as traders and porters, while the women stay at home. Habits of 165
intemperance, which are confined to the male sex, may also explain a greater mortality among them.

It would be interesting to investigate the effect 161
on reproduction of the system of matriarchy which 163
governs Khasi family life. The increase of the race is very slow. In the census of 1891 there were enumerated only 117 children under 5 to every hundred married women between 15 and 40, and in 1901 this number fell to 108. It has been suggested that the independence of the wife, and the facilities which exist for divorce, lead to restrictions upon child-bearing, and thus keep the population stationary. The question might with advantage be examined at the census of 1911.

The next characteristic of the Khasis which marks 787
them out for special notice is their method of divination 782
for ascertaining the causes of misfortune and the remedies to be applied. All forms of animistic religion make it their chief business to avert the wrath of the gods, to which calamities of all kinds—sickness, storm, murrain, loss of harvest—are ascribed, by some kind of propitiation; and in this the Khasis are not singular. But it is somewhat surprising to find among them the 787
identical method of *extispicium* which was in use among 171
the Romans, as well as an analogous development in the shape of egg-breaking, fully described by Major Gurdon (p. 221), which seems to have been known to

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR7 Khasi AR7

at Dárjiling, who reported unfavourably on them. They have since been made over to the Siem of Nongklao, who is responsible for their being kept clear of weeds and protected against fire. Up to the close of 1875–76 the total expenditure had been Rs. 672, or £67, 4s. 0d.

FERÆ NATURÆ.—Tigers, elephants, rhinoceros, buffaloes, *mithuns* or wild cows, bears, leopards, wolves, jackals, foxes, wild hog, and several kinds of deer abound in the Khásí and Jáintiá Hills. The expense of keeping down tigers in the shape of Government rewards amounted to £44, 10s. 0d. in 1869-70. The rate of reward now paid is Rs. 25 or £2, 10s. 0d. per head. No rewards have ever been given for the destruction of venomous serpents. The number of deaths from wild beasts and snake-bite reported to the police amounted to 28 in 1866-67, 18 in 1867-68, 16 in 1868-69, and 26 in 1869-70. The small game found in the Hills consists of black partridges, hill partridges, quails, ducks, teal, snipe, and woodcocks. The *mahsir* fish is caught in the rivers. No regular trade is carried on in the skins of wild animals; and, except in the case of wild elephants, the *feræ naturæ* are not made to contribute towards the wealth of the people.

ELEPHANTS.—Wild elephants are found in the lower ranges of the hills, and in the gorges opening on the valleys of the Surmá and the Brahmaputra. Each State in the Khásí Hills and each dolloiship in the Jáintiá Hills constitutes a separate hunting circle or *mahál*. In the Khásí States the conditions of elephant hunting are governed by rules framed in 1874-75 by the Chief Commissioner, and approved by the Government of India. These rules provide, (1) that the British Government will make no claim to royalty on account of elephants caught in the Khásí Hills; (2) that one half of the proceeds of the sale of each elephant caught shall be paid over to the chief whose State forms the *mahál*, and the other half retained by Government; (3) that if a chief wishes to hunt elephants on his own account, the *mahál* composed of his State shall be reserved from sale, and a special arrangement shall be made with him on the basis that half the proceeds of the hunting shall accrue to Government. A special form of hunting licence in accordance with these rules has been settled by the Chief Commissioner. In the Jáintiá Hills, as being British territory, the ordinary Assam rules are in force, in accordance with which leases of the *mahals* are sold at intervals of two years to the highest bidder at